

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 368
By Ford J

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Mr. Rufus Thomas.

WHEREAS, in the course of our state's history, there have emerged unusual men and women who have achieved great personal success and have devoted themselves, their resources and their talents to enriching the lives of those around them; and

WHEREAS, during the Bicentennial of Tennessee's history, this General Assembly is proud to honor those persons who are role models, a credit to their family, community and state; and

WHEREAS, Rufus Thomas is one such person, a great presence and musical icon in our state who has entertained us with his wonderful brand of humor and music for more than 50 years; and

WHEREAS, Rufus Thomas is an example of what makes Tennessee special to people all over the world; and

WHEREAS, a brilliant entertainer and devoted ambassador of Tennessee music all over the world, the contributions of this music pioneer has played a significant part in weaving the fabric that is Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Rufus Thomas has helped to shape the direction of popular music as we know it today. In the 1950s and 60s, he was the organizer, talent coordinator and M.C. of the weekly amateur contests at the world famous Palace Theater on Beale Street, Memphis, Tennessee, and as the premier personality on radio station WDIA in the 50s, 60s and 70s, he

helped launch and nurture the careers of B.B. King, Johnny Ace, Bobby “Blue” Bland, Little Junior Parkes and many jazz, blues and R&B stars; and

WHEREAS, he was the first “D.J.” to play Elvis Presley’s records on what was then a radio station with exclusively African American music programming; and

WHEREAS, he has been directly and indirectly responsible for the successful careers of nationally and internationally respected stars such as Elvis Presley, B.B. King, The Beatles, Jerry Lee Lewis, The Rolling Stones, The Who, and many others; and

WHEREAS, this great man has used his time, resources, and vast influence to help the plight of socially and economically disadvantaged youth; and

WHEREAS, his personal charisma and his great influence continue to spread the goodwill of Tennessee to the far corners of the globe; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby commend Mr. Rufus Thomas on his exemplary service to Tennessee as a longtime leader, pioneer and role model. We especially appreciate his commitment, dedication and service to the great state of Tennessee and find it fitting that we pause during our Bicentennial year to pay tribute to his talent and service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation, with this final clause omitted from such copy.